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ACS CAN Supports:

Increasing the age of sale to 21 for all tobacco products, liquid nicotine and Electronic cigarettes

My name is Julianne Hart and I am the Government Relations Director with the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today in support of Tobacco 21. We have worked closely with counties across the state to promote Tobacco 21 policies as part of a comprehensive approach to reduce smoking rates. We strongly support the current legislation and wanted to provide answers to some of the most commonly asked questions:

Haven't we already won the war on smoking and tobacco?

No. Smoking is a risk factor for numerous cancers.

107,530 New Yorkers will learn this year they have cancer. Sadly, 35,960 New Yorkers will lose their battle to cancer this year.ⁱ Smoking increases the risk for lung cancer, the state's no. 1 cancer killer.ⁱⁱ **In addition, smoking is a risk factor for cancers of the mouth, larynx, pharynx, esophagus, kidney, cervix, liver, bladder, pancreas, stomach, colon/rectum and myeloid leukemia.**

Smoking Rates in Tompkins County:

Right here in Tompkins County, approximately 14.1% of adults are still smoking. Sadly, the impact the tobacco industry has on the poor is even greater. Approximately **26% of low income county residents** (earning less than \$25,000 per year), **our most vulnerable, are still smoking.**

Why Tobacco 21?

Approximately 95 percent of adults who smoke started smoking before the age of 21.ⁱⁱⁱ

This time period is when the brain is fully developing, including the parts responsible for decision making, impulse control, sensation seeking, and susceptibility to peer pressure.^{iv} Adolescents and young adults are therefore a critical population to target with evidenced-based, tobacco control strategies.

What should be included?

To combat tobacco use and the proliferation of the use of other tobacco products, the law must raise the minimum age of sale of **all tobacco products**, including electronic cigarettes, to the age of 21 with strong retailer compliance and active enforcement as part of its comprehensive strategy to reduce youth initiation.

Why are so many counties acting on Tobacco 21 now?

There is a growing body of evidence that Tobacco 21 could reduce smoking rates. A March 2015 report by the Institute of Medicine, *The Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Access to Tobacco Products*, **predicts that raising the national minimum age for the sale of tobacco products to 21 will likely lead to a 12 percent reduction in smoking prevalence**

Tobacco 21 works - laws in New York State:

Both upstate and downstate communities have enacted Tobacco 21 policies including:

- Cortland County
- New York City
- Suffolk County
- Chautauqua County
- Cattaraugus County
- Albany County
- Schenectady County
- Orange County
- Town of North Hempstead

Should Military members be exempt from protections provided by Tobacco 21?

No. Providing for military exemptions to age 21 laws exposes our heroes to a deadly and costly addiction. Tobacco products cause disease and premature death when used as intended. We owe it to members of the military - particularly younger members - to protect them from a lifetime of addiction, diseases that could adversely affect their fitness and readiness, and premature death from tobacco use. Raising the minimum age of tobacco sale will actually help our military remain healthy and ready for duty. Rather than tobacco use, we encourage the use of effective stress reduction and coping strategies that do not pose a risk to health. Towards this end, we strongly oppose the inclusion of any military exemption and urge members to. **The men and women in the military that protect all of us deserve to be protected from Big Tobacco and a lifetime of addiction and diseases. As such we cannot support legislation that doesn't extend this protection to members of the military and strongly urge withdraw from consideration any bill that includes a military exemption.**

We are proud that ALL the localities in New York with a Tobacco 21 policy have extended the policy to all and are protecting members of the military. We encourage Tompkins County to provide the same protection to our heroes.

Increasing the age of sale for tobacco products to 21 is a promising step in strengthening Tompkins tobacco laws and improving public health.

ⁱ The 2017 Cancer facts and figures report: <http://www.cancer.org/research/cancerfactsstatistics/cancerfactsfigures2016/index>

ⁱⁱ The 2016 Cancer facts and figures report: <http://www.cancer.org/research/cancerfactsstatistics/cancerfactsfigures2016/index>

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Smoking – 50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014.

^{iv} U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Prevention Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office on Smoking and Health, 2012.